

SAN JUAN RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM  
COORDINATION COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY  
28 SEPTEMBER 1995  
FARMINGTON, NEW MEXICO

The meeting of the Coordination Committee of the San Juan Recovery Implementation Program was held on 28 September 1995 in Farmington, New Mexico.

Program Participants were represented by the following individuals:

Fish and Wildlife Service (Region 2)	Lynn Starnes
Fish and Wildlife Service (Region 6)	Jim Lutey
Bureau of Reclamation	Christine Karas
Bureau of Land Management	Stephanie Odell
Bureau of Indian Affairs	Bob Krakow
New Mexico	Bill Miller
Southern Ute Indian Tribe	Scott McElroy
Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribe	Dan Israel
Jicarilla Apache Tribe	Les Taylor
Water Development Interests	Tom Pitts

The representative of the State of Colorado was not present. A roster of all attendees is attached.

The draft agenda was reviewed by Committee members and modified to add discussions of this year's razorback sucker stocking effort and procedures for the conduct of business of the Program and its committees. Agenda items were addressed in the order presented below.

#### Draft FY 1998 Budget

The 3rd draft of the FY 98 budget developed by the Biology Committee and sent previously to Coordination Committee members was discussed. In general, this draft was acceptable after previous reviews. Specific concerns expressed by Coordination Committee members was augmentation of roundtail chub (concern of precedence over endangered species augmentation efforts), contingency research and management (not popular with congressional budget committees - this was eliminated), and the lack of deliniation of staffing requirements (not an issue with earlier drafts). The Biology Committee will provide a breakout of staffing needs and incorporate FTE's (through a multiplier of identified funds) and provide to the subgroup chaired by New Mexico Representative Bill Miller. That subgroup will incorporate input and report back to the Coordination Committee at its next meeting. Members of the subgroup will meet with the Biology Committee to clarify data needs and alleviate duplicative work in supplying data in response to vague or conflicting requests.

#### 1997 Budget Process

The FY 1997 agency budgets are in Washington and it is unknown if SJRIP funding needs

will be accommodated. A discussion of the Program sending representatives to Washington to encourage funding resulted in the proposal that Mr. Miller's subgroup address the possibility and report back to the Coordination Committee at the next meeting. Should it appear that Service funds would not provide for the SJRIP, Mr. Pitts requested that the Service so advise the Coordination Committee.

#### Winter Low Flow Releases

The results of the Biology Committee 31 August - 1 September meeting discussion of winter low-flow test release was presented (position attached). The Committee discussed the various aspects of the NEPA compliance for flows of 2-weeks (this coming January) and 4-month (winter of 1996-1997) duration, and the potential for the Committee to assist the Bureau of Reclamation in that compliance. Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribe Representative placed a motion before the Committee that the Committee request the Bureau of Reclamation proceed with the 2-week test as non-injurious and not requiring NEPA and that Bureau personnel proceed with working on NEPA documentation for the 4-month releases. Prior to a vote on the motion, Bureau Representative Christine Karas provided background information on the activities of the Bureau to date in addressing NEPA concerns for the releases and the low probability that the low flow release could be addressed in the upcoming Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on the Animas-La Plata Project. There will still be opportunities for public comment prior to any releases, in addition to the previous three public meetings held this year. Committee representatives discussed the capability to compress the time line by providing assistance to the Bureau to assist in completion of NEPA requirements. However, the feasibility of doing so is not yet known.

The following questions were posed:

1. Is the test necessary?
2. What are the consequences to water users of not doing low-flow tests?
3. Why not put the razorback sucker in the river, reduce the flows to 250 cfs and determine changes in behavior?
4. After 4 months, will the Biology Committee request an additional test or a test of 8 months.

It was discussed that one period of a 4-month test is not the best for scientific validity (it should be replicated). But the point is that full development will result in flows of 250 cfs, the need to test the response of the fish community to that ultimate flow is obvious. A test of this at 4 months is necessary to conduct the final section 7 consultation on the full Animas-La Plata Project. The information gained from the test is necessary not only for ALP, but also other projects such as the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project (NIIP). A single test period is not going to answer all the questions but it will provide information.

Mr. Israel repeated his motion; the vote was recorded as follows:

In favor	9
Absent	1 (Colorado Representative Mr. Evans)
Abstaining	1 (Water Development Interests Representative)

### Razorback Sucker Stocking

The Environmental Assessment and Intra-Service Section 7 Evaluation were provided to the Coordination Committee in support of Fish and Wildlife Service's 1995 stocking of 20 radio tagged razorback suckers in the San Juan River below Hogback Diversion Dam.

### Minor Depletions

In response to a request for water depletions to support a proposed project at Red Mesa Dam, the Fish and Wildlife Service presented a summary of current minor depletions from the San Juan Basin and an analysis of impacts to the flexibility of the minor depletions account to satisfy minor water users (3,000 af ceiling per year). That summary is attached. The majority of minor depletions handled by the account are less than 100 af. The Red Mesa Project would require over 2,000 af. This project is under formal consultation by the Service with the Corps of Engineers and therefore recommends that it not be incorporated in the minor depletions account.

### Integration Report

A review of the report was presented by Mr. Paul Holden and primarily summarized the results of all research activities conducted during the period 1991-1994. Discrete research topics remained as such, without formal integration of findings among different aspects, e.g. biology, hydrology, and channel morphology. Future efforts will concentrate more on integration of findings in order to more accurately characterize the interrelationships between fish communities, flows, and habitat. Recommendations in the report included: 1) standardization of geomorphic reach reporting, 2) database development and refinement, 3) expansion of research on Colorado squawfish reproductive success, 4) initiation of physical habitat modification studies, 5) evaluation of the impacts of instream barrier removal at the upper end of Lake Powell on fish community structure in the lower San Juan River, 6) initiate pilot studies of Colorado squawfish introduction into the upper San Juan River above diversions, and 7) initiation of discussions and studies on flow protection. The Coordination Committee was reluctant to fully endorse all recommendations without additional time to review the report. Nonetheless, following that presentation, the Committee discussed and agreed that the recommendations from the report be used in the development of the FY 1996 workplan from the Biology Committee.

### Peer Review

A panel of experts will have the responsibility for review of specific elements or in overall program review. Peer review will be a high priority item for the FY 1996 budget.

### Procedures

New Mexico Representative Bill Miller will develop draft procedures on how the Program committees will meet and conduct business. He will send the draft document to members of the Coordination Committee for review. The Water Development Interests

Representative, in reponse to concerns from local entities, requested that the Biology Committee contact Randy Kirkpatrick, San Juan Water Commission, if assistance in finding meeting room facilities in the Basin is needed.

Next Coordination Committee Meeting

December 4, 1995, in Farmington, New Mexico.

Attachments

San Juan Recovery Implementation Plan  
Winter Low Flow Test Release  
Biology Committee Recommendations  
September 1, 1995

The Biology Committee continues to believe that it is necessary to test a winter low flow in the critical habitat for Colorado squawfish and razorback sucker prior to making a winter flow recommendation. The target low flow in the San Juan River below Shiprock, New Mexico is 600-650 cfs. Since the median low flow in the system with no release from Navajo Dam is about 350 cfs, a release from the dam of 250 cfs is anticipated to be necessary to provide the desired flow in the lower river. The Biology Committee believes that a test release below 250 cfs is not desirable due to uncertain impacts to the native fish community. The requested release would not fall below 250 cfs, even if the resulting flow in the lower river exceeds 600 cfs.

There has been much discussion about the required duration of the test release. It has been the committee's consistent position that the minimum duration to allow assessment of a biological response is 4 months. In May of 1995 Reclamation determined that an EIS would likely be required for a test of this duration and indicated that it would not be possible to complete a full EIS in time for the release to be made in water year 1996. Methods of collecting data to allow a low flow recommendation without completing the 4 month test were discussed by the Biology Committee on May 31, 1995. It was determined that the minimum duration of the test flows to allow any data collection would be 2 weeks. Given the limited amount of information that could be gathered in such a short test period, the committee was of the opinion that most of the information on impact to habitat could be collected at other times of the year or at other flows and existing models used to predict conditions in the habitat. However, no biological response in the fish could be measured.

In the June 28, 1995 meeting of the Coordination Committee it was decided that a short test was better than no test at all and requested Reclamation proceed with a 2 week test flow in the winter of 1996 to allow questions to be answered concerning the impact on the trout fishery and to collect data on the habitat for the endangered species. The request was made in light of the inability of USBR to complete NEPA compliance on the 4 month request in time for a 1996 release. In light of these events, the Biology Committee makes the following request for operation of test flows:

Perform a 4 month duration 250 cfs release from Navajo Dam as soon as the appropriate NEPA compliance can be completed for such action. Such a test is deemed essential to validate a low flow recommendation materially different from the current 500 cfs, including any reduction in Animas base flows that would result in a reduction in winter flows downstream of Shiprock, NM below 850 cfs for any extended period of time. The test would begin on November 1 and extend through February 28. Ramping sufficient to avoid stranding fish in isolated pools or shoals would be necessary. Flows should not be reduced from 500 cfs to 250 cfs in less than 6 hours and not more than 24 hours. Ramp up at the completion of the test period should follow the same pattern. Flows would not be allowed to fall below 500 cfs below Shiprock.

This 4 month duration test would allow an assessment of biological response that should be refined through subsequent low flow replications.

If additional test flows are necessary to collect data for NEPA compliance, the following options should be considered:

- The Biology Committee recommends a 1 month test at 250 cfs release. This is the minimum time to measure impact to trout due to crowding or dietary limitations and would be sufficient to assess impact to the macroinvertebrate community in the quality waters. While the flows were reduced, winter habitat would be mapped and water quality and habitat utilization by the endangered species would be assessed. The 30 day period would be from January 1, through January 30, 1996. Ramping rates would be as discussed above.
- If it is determined that the 30 day test release is not possible and Reclamation still believes that it is desirable to collect data in preparation for the EIS for the longer duration test, then the minimum release period recommended is 2 weeks. This would allow verification of IFIM modeling in the trout reach, but probably not sufficient duration to measure impact to the macroinvertebrates or trout. While the flows were reduced, winter habitat would be mapped and habitat utilization by the endangered species would be assessed, although the duration is insufficient to fully understand the impact of the reduced flow on habitat utilization. Flows should be reduced from 800 cfs (if that is this winter's base release) to 500 cfs one week in advance of the scheduled low flow. It is critical that the flows be ramped down from 500 cfs to 250 cfs as rapidly as possible (6 hours) on the first day of the test period to allow sufficient time for flow stabilization in the lower river prior to video taping and mapping with a similar ramping back to base flow. The duration would be from January 1 through January 14, 1996 with the possibility of a one week delay in case of weather problems for video taping. Flows below Shiprock would not be allowed to drop below 500 cfs.

The Biology Committee will monitor response to the reduced flows and make necessary recommendations concerning flow manipulation during the course of the test flow.

Description of need and additional background from the scoping documents for the original request may be used in support of this action.

## MINOR DEPLETIONS

The Fish and Wildlife Service has received an advance copy of the Corps of Engineers public notice to issue a Clean Water Act 404 permit for the proposed enlargement of Red Mesa Reservoir and safety modifications to Red Mesa Dam on Hay Gulch, a tributary of the La Plata River, in La Plata County, Colorado. We are in the process of reviewing the proposed action in light of whether it could and should be addressed under the minor depletions ceiling on the San Juan River.

The San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program Document provides the following discussion of minor depletions:

In rendering biological opinions on federal actions resulting in minor depletions, the Service will consider all new information concerning project impacts and the status of the listed species, and good faith implementation of this Implementation Program in determining if sufficient progress toward recovery has been made to offset depletion impacts, or other project-induced impacts, on listed fish. It is understood that the aggregate of all minor depletions subject to section 7 consultation during the 7-year research period may result in a total annual depletion of not more than 3,000 acre-feet under the conditions of this paragraph.

A copy of the minor depletions table maintained by this office is attached for your use. As evident in the table, at this time there is an aggregate of about 1300 acre-feet available for depletions.

The total existing depletion for the Red Mesa project is 1,202 acre-feet, an aggregate of the reservoir water surface evaporation (101.9 af) and the annual irrigation depletion based on 1,140 acres receiving a 49% supply with a consumptive use rate of 1.97 af per acre (1,100). The total depletion with the enlargement is estimated to be 2,199 af.

The provision of 2,199 af of water for Red Mesa exceeds what is currently available in the minor depletions account. It is 400% more than the largest of the depletions accommodated in the minor depletions arena.

The Fish and Wildlife Service believes that allowing all the remaining minor depletions water to be committed to one project for an anticipated project life of 50 years does not fulfill the purpose of setting aside a block of water for use by the minor or short term users. With this application satisfied, other entities would not be able to get their depletions (Region 6 is currently working to provide the Southern Ute Tribe with an opinion on about 450 af). The current level of the larger individual depletion allowed to go forward has been around 50 to 100 acre-feet (and the majority much below that amount) for the last 4 years. With the ceiling met by the allocation of the remaining water to one project, we would be unable to respond to other requests.

Minor Depletions, San Juan River  
15 September 1995

Annual Accounting of 3,000 a-f Minor Depletions

Date	Entity (State)	Depletion	Duration	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
3/5/92	Meridian Oil (NM)	50 a-f	5 years	50	50	50	50	50	0	0
3/5/92	Northern Heights Bloomfield Water and Sanitation (NM)	40 a-f	5 years	40	40	40	40	40	0	0
3/5/92	Elks Lodge No. 1747 (NM)	20 a-f	5 years	20	20	20	20	20	0	0
3/5/92	Mr. Douglas Lee (NM)	80 a-f	5 years	80	80	80	80	80	0	0
3/5/92	Nielson Incorporated (NM)	14 a-f	1 year	14	0	0	0	0	0	0
3/5/92	Bloomfield Refinery	340 a-f	1 year	340	0	0	0	0	0	0
3/5/92	San Juan Basin Water Haulers (NM)	500 a-f	5 years	500	500	500	500	500	0	0
12/22/92	North Heights Bloomfield Water and Sanitation (NM)	20 a-f	5 years	20	20	20	20	20	0	0
6/26/92	Forest Groves Estates Homeowners Association (CO)	43 a-f <sup>1</sup>	5 years	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6/26/92	Los Ranchitos, Inc. (CO)	36 a-f <sup>1</sup>	5 years	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6/26/92	Country Aire Estates (CO)	7 a-f <sup>1</sup>	5 years	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5/18/93	Burns Fish Pond (CO)	1 a-f		0	1	1	1	1	1	1
6/17/93	Pagosa Springs (CO)	4 a-f		0	4	4	4	4	4	4
8/30/93	Elk Springs Ranch (CO)	3 a-f		0	3	3	3	3	3	3
1/6/94	Pond Construction (CO)	5.1 a-f		0	0	5.1	5.1	5.1	5.1	5.1
5/1/94	E. Earl Hickam	150 a-f	1 year	0	0	150	0	0	0	0
6/1/94	Bureau of Land Management	176 a-f	5 years	0	0	176	176	176	176	176
7/20/94	Pine Gulch Ponds (CO) CoE	.5 a-f		0	0	.5	.5	.5	.5	.5
8/10/94	Delzell Stock Tank (CO) SCS	.5 a-f		0	0	.5	.5	.5	.5	.5
8/10/94	Delzell Stock Tank (CO)	.5 a-f		0	0	.5	.5	.5	.5	.5
10/11/94	Bureau of Land Management	50 a-f		0	0	0	50	50	50	50
12/22/94	Pine River CoE	.14 a-f		0	0	0	.14	.14	.14	.14

Date	Entity (State)	Depletion Duration	Annual Accounting of 3,000 a-f Minor Depletions						
			1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
1/23/95	FHwy	87 a-f	0	0	0	87	87	87	87
2/21/95	Scott Gravel CoE	15 a-f	0	0	0	15	15	15	15
4/26/95	Shenandoah CoE	54.9 a-f	0	0	0	54.9	54.9	54.9	54.9
5/8/95	Cortez Ponds NRCS	6.33 a-f	0	0	0	6.33	6.33	6.33	6.33
6/7/95	Durango CoE	85 a-f	0	0	0	85	85	85	85
6/16/95	Mary Fletcher CoE	0.07 a-f	0	0	0	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07
6/16/95	Day Gravel CoE	11.6 a-f	0	0	0	11.6	11.6	11.6	11.6
6/28/95	San Juan NF	1.3 a-f	0	0	0	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3
8/8/95	CoE	12.3 a-f	0	0	0	12.3	12.3	12.3	12.3
8/14/95	CoE	68 a-f	0	0	0	68	68	68	68
8/14/95	Bloomfield Refinery	340 a-f	0	0	0	340	340	340	340
8/31/95	NPS Mesa Verde NP	79.2 a-f	0	0	0	79.2	79.2	79.2	79.2
Cumulative Annual Total (a-f).....			1064	718	1038	1699.8	1699.8	1001.44	1001.44
Balance Available (a-f).....			1936	2282	1960	1300.2	1300.2	1998.5	1998.5

<sup>1</sup> Not included as a minor depletion because it was included in the 18,000 a-f baseline depletion for Colorado -- Region 6 (FWS) did not issue a biological opinion for these depletions.

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Coordination Committee Meeting  
28 Sept. 1995  
Farmington, NM

<u>Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>Phone</u>
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Nick Ashcroft	SAN JUAN RURAL DOMESTIC ASST	505-632-298
Rob Clifford	FOUR CORNERS POWER PLANT	505-598-821
Jack Scott	Gulf	505-334-888
Jim Decker	TAR	970-247-88
STEVE HENRY	NM GAME & FISH	827-790
Bill Papich	The Daily Time	505-325-4
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Kathy DiCamillo	PNM	505-241-49
Melisa McCelvey	SOSR	505/632-53
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Larry Crist	Reclamation X Region	801 524-629
Steven Platania	MSB - Dept of Biol, UNM	505 277-60
Ferdinand Notah	NAPI	505/327-52
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TERRY RUTER	PRC FOR PNM	303/312-88
Scott Berger	PNM	505/241-20
Errol Jensen	USBR - Durango	970/385-65
Randy Kirkpatrick	SJWC - Farmington	625-599-14
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JAMES P. RILEY	BLANCO WATER USERS ASSOC.	505-632-26
STANLEY POLLACK	NAVAJO NARAJ DEPT. OF JUSTICE	520/871-693
RICHARD L GEDING	San Juan Fly Fishing Fed.	505-325-18
Orion Utton	ARAWA	505-334-
Steve Harris	Red Mesa Reservoir Company	970-259-53
DAVID TOMKO	N.M. ENV. DEPT.	505-327-98
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William J. Miller	NM Interstate Stream Comm.	505.827.61
Wes Taylor	Jicarilla Apache Tribe	505-243-427
Tom Pitts	Water Development Interests	303-667-86
A. Kurt Saenz	US Senator Domenici	505-988-651